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VII.—THE DREAMS OF CHARLEMAGNE IN THE *CHANSON DE ROLAND*

The dreams of Charlemagne in *Rol.* 717-36 and 2525-69 have several times been the subject of critical investigations. Professor Rajna¹ sees in them a direct influence of the Old Teutonic epic; Wilhelm Tavernier,² on the other hand, is inclined to consider at least one of them as the literary imitation of a dream occurring in the *Waltharius*. The fact that some of those dreams are animal dreams appeared also to him as a proof of Teutonic influences due perhaps to the Norman descent of the author.³ It will, therefore, be the purpose of this paper to examine those dreams and to test the arguments put forward to prove their Teutonic character.

There are, in all, four dreams which form two groups. The first two take place the night before Charlemagne follows Ganelon's perfidious counsel, entrusting Roland and the twelve peers with the rear guard; the third and fourth fall immediately before the arrival of Baligant and his host. Dreams I and III are clearly warning dreams. Of the latter this is expressly stated by the poet, who has God send the angel Gabriel to the sleeping monarch to announce to him the impending danger. The same cannot

¹ *Le origini dell' epopea francese*, Firenze, 1884, pp. 449 ff.

² *Beiträge zur Rolandsforschung* IV, Zeitschr. f. franz. Sprache u. Lit., XLII², 1914, p. 64.

³ *Beiträge zur Rolandsforschung* I, Zeitschr. f. franz. Sprache u. Lit., XXXVI¹, 1910, pp. 93 f. Richard Mentz, *Die Träume in den altfranzösischen Karls- und Artus-Epen*, Marburg, 1888, in Stengels Ausgaben u. Abhandlungen, LXXIII, did not examine the rich material he collected as to the origin of the animal dream in the French epic. Emil Benezé, *Das Traummotiv in der mittelhochdeutschen Dichtung bis 1250 und in alten deutschen Volksliedern*, Halle, Niemeyer, 1897, p. 31. appears to adhere to Professor Rajna's theory.

be said of Dream IV, as in that case it would have been useless to warn the emperor, the law of the *pleit* not allowing him to interfere with its legal proceedings. Dream IV is therefore merely a prophetic, not a warning dream. The interpretation of Dream II is doubtful. Professor Rajna⁴ sees in the *veltre* of verse 730 Roland, in the two attacking animals probably Ganelon and Marsile. Mentz⁵ thinks that the dream refers to the *pleit* of Ganelon, like Dream IV. If the latter opinion be true, Dream II would rank among the prophetic dreams.

The pairs of dreams which are united in groups do not, however, portend precisely the same events. Dream I merely warns Charles of Ganelon; Dream II evidently speaks of two enemies of the emperor. It also brings in a defender of the monarch and thus contains more matter than Dream I.

The two dreams of the second group portend two entirely different things: the first warns Charlemagne of the great danger threatening his army and forebodes his own single combat with Baligant; the second alludes to the events connected with Ganelon's *pleit*. Neither one of the two groups represents, then, parallel dreams in the strict sense of the term.

When considering the contents of the four dreams, we find that we must distinguish two classes, Dream I belonging to the first, the rest to the second. For Dream I is the only one which does not have recourse to allegorical symbolism, but presents the real event. The other three are allegorical dreams. Of the latter, II and IV have unity of action. Dream III lacks unity in that it portends two different things: first, the danger threatening the

⁴Op. cit., p. 450.

⁵Op. cit., p. 96.

French army, second, Charlemagne's combat with Baligant.

In all three dreams based upon allegory, persons are represented by animals, a very specific animal standing for a definite personage. The only person not represented by an animal is the dreamer himself: Charlemagne, who fights the animals in Dreams II and III. The animals occurring are: boar (II), bear (IV), hound (II and IV), leopard (II and III), lion and a number of monsters (III). All three allegorical dreams are, then, animal dreams.

Let us try, from the data given above, to draw conclusions as to the origin of the dreams. When inserting them in his poem, the author of the *Roland* may have drawn on oral sources, the folkloristic background of his own people, or he may have had literary models, belonging to Old Teutonic epic literature, as Professor Rajna supposes, to classical Latin literature, or to the Old Testament. It will be our task to determine to which of those four sources *Turolodus* was chiefly indebted for the construction of the dreams.

Dreams occur in the literature and folklore of all nations and in all times. The large majority of them are warning or prophetic in character, that is, they are sent by the deity either to forewarn the dreamer of some great danger or merely to inform him of some unavoidable future events. The dreams of Pharaoh, in *Genesis*,⁶ of Cimon, in Plutarch,⁷ and of Krimhild before Siegfried's death⁸ are warning dreams; those of Pharaoh's butler and baker,⁹ of King Astyages before Cyrus' birth,¹⁰ and of

⁶ XLI, 1-32.

⁷ *Vit. paral., Cimon*, XVIII.

⁸ *Der Nibelunge Not*, I, XVI, 922.

⁹ *Gen.* XL, 5-20.

¹⁰ *Herodotus, Hist.*, I, 107-8.

Krimhild before Siegfried's arrival in Worms¹¹ are merely prophetic. Both classes often merge imperceptibly into one another, so that it is sometimes impossible to conclude from the nature of a dream, as warning or prophetic, as to its Hebrew, Greco-Roman or Teutonic origin.

From what we have seen above it seems tolerably certain that the author of the *Roland* had in mind the phenomenon of parallel dreams, as it is also certain that he did not succeed perfectly in constructing them, the most decisive trait of parallel dreams, the portent of precisely the same event, being absent. But even if we assume that the author's model presented a perfect parallelism of dreams, this does not lead us very far; for parallel dreams, too, are the property of no particular race or period. The dreams of Pharaoh, of Astyages, and those contained in the Saga of Halfdan the Black¹² are all perfect parallel dreams.

The next distinguishing feature we have found to exist in the dreams of Charlemagne in the *Roland* is their allegorical character. Allegory occurs very frequently in dreams; for only in the minority of all cases do the gods consent to indicate the future by a dream of plain reality. This is likewise shown by the dreams quoted above. Also that animals should occur as symbols is not surprising; the kine of Pharaoh's dream are, as is well known, symbols of years. What may constitute a characteristic and decisive trait is that in the *Roland* personages are represented by beasts, that each of the latter represents a very specific personage whose character is identified with that of the beast, and that the allegorical symbolism is an exact reflection of the future, agreeing with it in the minutest details.

We possess a monograph on the dreams of the Old Norse

¹¹ *Der Nibelunge Not*, I, 13-7.

¹² *Halfdans S. Svarta*, cap. 6-7.

Saga literature,¹³ the outstanding results of which may be summarized as follows:

1. The large majority of the dreams of the Old Norse sagas are allegorical animal dreams, the beasts representing personages whose character is in accordance with that generally attributed to the beast.

2. They are the direct consequence of Old Scandinavian fatalism, as they are sent to the hero in order that he may meet his fate in a dignified way, having had time to prepare himself, thanks to the dream.

3. They are exact reflections of reality, agreeing with the coming events even in the most insignificant details.

To begin with the second of these points, we find no traces of fatalism in the *Roland*, a fact which may be due to Christian influence or to the arrangement of the dreams; for it is not Roland or Ganelon who has those dreams, but Charlemagne, whose death is not impending. As for points 1 and 3, we have seen above how closely the dreams of the *Roland* resemble those of the sagas. The question arises: Is the detailed animal dream characteristic of Old Norse and Teutonic literature and folklore alone, or do we meet it elsewhere, above all, in the ancient writers and the Old Testament?

Upon examining the two most important Semitic works which were accessible to a mediæval poet: the Old Testament and Josephus, I found that the class of dreams under discussion does not occur in either of them.¹⁴

¹³ Wilhelm Henzen, *Ueber die Träume in der altnordischen Sagaliteratur*, Leipzig, 1890.

¹⁴ The dreams in *Daniel*, cap. VII and cap. VIII, do not seem to belong to the class of detailed animal dreams in our sense of the term, in that the beasts do not signify definite living persons, but empires and dynasties, and in the case of the he-goat in cap. VIII an indefinite future king (Alexander the Great?). The beasts in *Revelation*, cap. IV and cap. XIII, appear to be symbols and alle-

The case is different as regards ancient Greek and Roman literature, where this class of dreams is found very frequently and in the most famous writers of antiquity. To prove this, I shall here discuss five dreams taken from Homer, Herodotus, Plutarch, and Pausanias.

Professor Rajna¹⁵ was aware of the fact that in the *Odyssey*, XIX, 535 ff., Penelope dreams of an eagle killing her geese, which is meant to portend the death of the suitors.¹⁶

In Herodotus,¹⁷ Agarista, mother of Pericles, when with child, dreams that she is delivered of a lion.

In Plutarch's *Vitae parallelae*,¹⁸ Cimon dreams of a barking dog, which signifies his Median enemy.

In the first book of Pausanias' *Descriptiae Graeciae*,¹⁹ the author narrates that Socrates dreamt of a swan who flew into his bosom the night before Plato became his disciple.

In the fourth book of the same work,²⁰ a girl dreams that wolves bring a lion to her farm, the lion being bound and without claws. She loosens his bonds, finds his claws, gives them to him, and he then tears the wolves to pieces. Shortly afterwards, Aristomenes is brought to her farm in

gories rather than personifications of contemporary individuals. I do not know whether they have ever been interpreted in any such way during the middle ages. A further difference between the Semitic animal dreams and those under discussion is that the former do not show the beasts in a definite attitude toward the dreamer, an attitude of hostility, sympathy, etc., as is the case in many of the dreams of Aryan origin.

¹⁵ Op. cit., p. 451.

¹⁶ Cf. also W. S. Messer, *The Dream in Homer and Greek Tragedy*, New York, 1918, p. 30.

¹⁷ Hist., VI, 131; cf. also Plutarch, *Vitae paral.*, *Pericles*, III.

¹⁸ Op. cit., *Cimon*, XVIII.

¹⁹ XXX, 30.

²⁰ XIX, 4.

fetters, whereupon she frees the hero, who soon destroys his enemies.²¹

In Latin writers we do not meet with so many examples of detailed animal dreams. Still, they are not entirely absent. Livy²² recounts a dream which Hannibal had before invading Italy, showing a serpent which devastated the land about him. Ovid²³ distinguishes three different classes of dreams, one of which corresponds to the one under discussion, and which he calls by the Greek name *'Ικελος*. Also the dream of Tarquinius Superbus, cited by Cicero from an old Roman play²⁴ may be mentioned in this connection, proving that the detailed animal dream was not unknown to ancient Italic folklore.

Wilhelm Tavernier²⁵ expressed the opinion that the animal dreams of the *Roland* do not find direct parallels in the Roman epic. Nor is it to be supposed that Tuoldus imitated the dreams mentioned by Cicero and Livy. Although it is not impossible that some of the dreams found in Greek literature had penetrated into the Roman world of Western Europe and may thus have been known to a Mediaeval poet through Latin translations or reworkings, it is improbable that any of them exercised a direct influence upon the French poem. The fact, however, that this class of dreams is met with in Greek and Latin literature shows that it is not peculiar to Teutonic folklore alone.²⁶

²¹ The list could be considerably extended. Let it suffice here to refer to the index of Messer, op. cit., p. 33.

²² *Hist.*, XXI, 22; cf. also Cicero, *De divinat.*, I, 24.

²³ *Metamorphoses*, XI, 592 ff.

²⁴ Op. cit., I. 22.

²⁵ *Beiträge zur Rolandsforschung*, IV, Zeitschr. f. franz. Sprache u. Lit., XLII, 1914, p. 64.

²⁶ Whether the detailed animal dream is peculiar to the Greek,

It is true, the total number of animal dreams mentioned by the writers of classical antiquity is much smaller than the number of those found in the literature of the middle ages. But it would be hazardous to conclude from that fact that the rôle of this class of dreams was of far smaller importance among the Greeks and Romans than among the Teutonic nations of Mediæval Europe. It is also dangerous to use the animal dreams of later *chansons de geste* in such an examination, at least before the influence of the *Roland* on the later epics will have been determined, an influence which seems to me to have been very great.

It follows, therefore, that it is unnecessary to hold Teutonic influences responsible for the occurrence of detailed animal dreams in a work of the Romance middle ages. The author of the *Roland* may have drawn on Gallo-Roman traditions. This does not exclude the possibility of his having used literary models. For Dream II, Tavernier's supposition of a direct influence of the *Waltharius* is very likely indeed; but such a theory would certainly prove nothing as regards the Teutonic origin of the Old French epic in general and the *Chanson de Roland* in particular.

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Italic and Teutonic branches of the Indo-European family or whether it is common to all of them, is a question which I do not feel competent yet to answer, as it would require a knowledge of the folklore not only of the Celts and Slavs, but of the Asiatic groups also.